

NEWS RELEASE

Public Information From:

Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security
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EMERGENCY PLANNERS, PARTNERS TO HELP SOMALIS PREPARE FOR WORST

New Outreach Initiative Tackles Language, Cultural Barriers to Improve Safety

(COLUMBUS, OHIO) – Leaders from Franklin County’s Somali community and emergency management agencies will meet Monday to begin brainstorming how they can help local Somalis – despite formidable language and cultural barriers – better protect themselves and their families from disasters.

Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security (FCEM&HS) will host the meeting from 2-3:30 p.m. July 27 at its offices at 5300 Strawberry Farms Blvd. in Columbus. **The meeting is open to the news media.**

Participating organizations include FCEM&HS and the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office, co-chairs of the initiative; the community groups Somali Women and Children’s Alliance, Helping Africans in New Direction, and Somali Community Access Network; the Franklin County Board of Health; Columbus Public Health; the American Red Cross of Greater Columbus; and the crisis referral service FIRSTLINK.

“Our goal is to overcome profound language and cultural barriers to help Franklin County’s Somali community be better prepared for life-threatening emergencies such as tornados,” FCEM&HS Director Michael R. Pannell said. “This project can benefit both the local Somali community and the community as a whole. The better citizens are able to protect themselves in a crisis, the more resources there will be for those who need them.”

The group is a subcommittee of the Franklin County Government Somali Work Group, convened in April by County Commissioner John O’Grady to help provide a coordinated government response to the needs of the thousands of Somali immigrants in central Ohio.

Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security is a local government agency which coordinates county-wide emergency/disaster planning, education, warning, response and recovery to minimize the adverse impact on area residents and property. To learn more, go to **www.franklincountyohio.gov/emahs/**.